

Minutes
Program Simplification Subcommittee
August 13, 2002
GEF 1, Room H-206

Attendees:

Carol Amelong, DHCF/BIMA/QC
Jonathon Bader, WISCAP
Dick Buschmann, Community Advocate
Shirin Cabraal, LAW
Alesia Daniel, UMOs
Monica Danley, Milwaukee Co
Joanne Faber, ESS, Washington Co.
Brian Fangmeier, DHCF/BIMA/QC
Vickie Jessup, DHCF/BHCE/QC
Jim Jones, DHCF/BHCE, Deputy

John LaPhillip, DHCF/BHCE/MA Policy
Sue Larson, LOPP
Amy Mendel-Clemens, Call Center
Sara Pynenberg, DHCF/BIMA/FS Policy
Marilyn Rudd, DHCF/BIMA/FS CA
Sara Shackleton, ESS Dane County
Edie Sprehn, DWD/DHFS Liaison
Marcia Williamson, DHCF/BIMA/QC
Rick Zynda, DHCD/BIMA/FS Manager

Teleconferenced:

Deb Lyons, Green Lake County
Diane Northrup, St Croix County

Unable to Attend:

Christy Duhr – Richland County
Wendy Metcalf – Marquette County
John Janowski – Hunger Task Force
Carol Medaris – WI Council on Children & Families

▪ **Introductions – Rick**

This workgroup consists of representatives from DWD, DHFS, local agencies and advocacy groups.

▪ **Background – Rick**

- FS Transfer to DHFS – Structure, Process

Only July 8, 2002 the Food Stamp Program, administered in the Office of Nutrition Services and Program Integrity (ONSPI), was officially transferred from the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to the Department of Health & Family Services (DHFS). It will reside in the Division of Health Care Finance (DHCF), Bureau of Income Maintenance Administration (BIMA). Susan Wood has been appointed as the Bureau Director.

- IMAC – Purpose, Structure, Membership, Subcommittees, etc.

The Program Simplification workgroup is now a formal subcommittee of the Income Maintenance Advisory Committee (IMAC). It will focus on opportunities for integration and coordination between Food Stamps and Medicaid and with the employment programs administered in DWD.

The committee will provide recommendations to the Income Maintenance Advisory Committee.

- **Program Simplification Workgroup –**

- Secretary/Minutes –

Committee members were not in favor of rotating the task of taking minutes of the meeting. The majority felt that it diminishes an individual's ability to actively participate in the group discussions. The workgroup suggested support staff take the minutes and the co-chairs edit his/her material.

NOTE: After the meeting Rick discussed with Marilyn Rudd the possibility of her taking the minutes, and she has agreed to assume that role.

- Mission

Our mission is to discuss and develop policy/process changes that will improve customer service, ease workload for local agency staff, and improve efficiency and effectiveness in the Income Maintenance Programs.

- Role

The role of this committee will be to make recommendations to the IMAC on the design, implementation and evaluation of new initiatives.

- Priorities

1. Uniformity across programs – evaluate the options available to the state for standardizing policy and process across Food Stamps and Medicaid. The workgroup will develop recommendations for policy choices/changes in both Food Stamps and Medicaid that will help to standardize eligibility management without sacrificing program integrity or customer services goals. The first priority will be to assess new options for the state enacted in the recent reauthorization of the FSP under the Farm Bill.
2. Eliminate duplicate activity in processing disability applications across the DHFS Disability Determination unit and the Social Security Administration.
3. Design/update standard communication protocols from state to local agencies on policy and procedural clarifications and changes.

- Process

This workgroup will meet monthly to review and develop options that will bring our programs into alignment. Particular emphasis will be placed on those items that will provide the greatest immediate impact. The first topic for discussion will be the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, both mandated and optional items.

- Meeting Schedule

This workgroup will meet the second Thursday of each month from 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

However, we will deviate from that schedule for the September meeting in order to discuss the numerous options in the Farm Bill. It will be held on Tuesday, September 10th from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at _____.

We will also pursue finding another site for our meetings. Sara Shackleton has agreed to investigate the possibility of these meetings being held at Aberg Avenue or some other Dane County or other government facility with easier driving and parking access for the out-of-town members.

- **Farm Bill/Reauthorization of FS Act –**

- Background

Farm Bill 2002 has both mandatory and optional provisions related to the Food Stamp Program. Without writing waivers or proving cost neutrality, States can implement any of the optional provisions.

- Overview

Sara Pynenberg developed and discussed the two attached spreadsheets; these both list and describe the mandated and optional provisions within the Farm Bill. Sara's spreadsheets goes further than identification, it also describes the provisions, compares to Medicaid, and defines the impacts.

- **Farm Bill Mandates**

Section 4103 – Standard Deduction (effective October 1, 2002.)

This provision increases the current, fixed Standard deduction with a deduction that varies according to household size and is adjusted annually for cost-of-living increases.

- ❖ PCR 13646 is currently being researched by Deloitte Consulting. Change is scheduled to go into production as part of the FPL mass changes effective Oct. 1, 2002 FS eligibility.

Section 4107 – Simplified Definition of Resources (effective October 1, 2002.)

This provision increases the resource limit for households with a disabled member from \$2,000 to \$3,000 consistent with the limit for households with an elderly member.

- ❖ PCR 13645 is currently being researched by Deloitte Consulting and is scheduled to go into production to affect October 2002 FS eligibility.

Section 4401 – Partial Restoration of Benefits to Legal Immigrants (various effective dates)

This provision restores food stamp eligibility to qualified aliens who are otherwise eligible AND who:

- ❖ Are receiving disability benefits regardless of date of entry (current law requires them to have been in the county on 8/22/96) – effective FY2003;
- ❖ Are under 18 regardless of date of entry (current law limits eligibility to children who were in the country on 8/22/96) – effective FY 2004 & beyond; or
- ❖ Have lived in the U.S. continuously for 5 years as a qualified alien beginning on date of entry – effective April 2003:

Effective FY 2004, the provision also eliminates the deeming requirements for immigrant children that count the income and resources of the immigrants sponsor when determining food stamp eligibility and benefit amounts for the immigrant child. In a conforming amendment, it also eliminates the 3-year deeming requirements under section 5 (i) of the Food Stamp Act for children.

- ❖ These provisions extend federal FS eligibility to some legal immigrants currently receiving benefits through the State Options Food Stamp Program (SOFSP). Must be compared to the current SOFSP plan to determine the State GPR savings.
- Dick Buschmann recommended that this issue be brought to the attention of the IMAC. This is a potential source of revenue for the IM agencies and they may wish to make that recommendation to the Legislature.

▪ **Farm Bill Options**

Section 4107 – Simplified Definition of Resources (effective October 1, 2002).

Brief Analysis: Under this option, States could not exclude cash and amounts in financial institutions that are readily available, or other resources as determined by USDA.

Current MA Policy: All resources are exempt for Family Medicaid. Most resources are counted for EBD Medicaid.

Impact on Goals:

- Reduced documentation requirements for participants and workers.
- Very few FS benefit errors are identified due to incorrect resources.
- Average FS household liquid resources - \$142

The workgroup discussed a definition of “readily available” resources, keeping in mind the goals of aligning with other programs, particularly Medicaid. The group reached

consensus on a definition of cash, checking and savings (referencing Credit Union accounts as well as bank accounts) as the three items Wisconsin would define as “readily available” resources.

There was discussion of how you present local agency staff with information related to excluded assets, and that perhaps the reverse would be more valuable if we would provide a list of “Included Assets”. Anything not shown on that list would be ignored. This will require greater discussion and such a reference could not be implemented until CARES changes were programmed.

Sara Pynenberg will write a draft Operations Memo before the next meeting and will ask for additional recommendations from this workgroup. CARES implementation schedule and feedback from FNS Policy staff also needs to be considered.

Section 4102 – Simplified Definition of Income (effective October 1, 2002)

Brief Analysis: Currently, all regular and predictable sources of income must be included in the FS budget with the exception of a long list of sources that must be excluded. This option would allow alignment of the FS countable income definition with MA and/or TANF with certain exceptions.

Impact on Goals:

- Reduce the types of income that must be reported and verified for FS
- Simplify the definition and align program policies.
- Increased automation would reduce the chances of worker and client errors

The Food Stamp Program has always been very prescriptive regarding verification of income. Medicaid allows self-declaration and workers seek further verification only when there is a question regarding the information presented. Such a “questionable” situation arises if the worker has conflicting information – i.e. the client has presented information that differs from the information given at another time, data exchange contradicts statements, or there has been a fraud conviction.

A simplified definition of income is more complicated although, again, that allows us to move toward greater program alignment. It must, however, include Child Support income.

Sara will write an issue paper following a meeting with MA Policy analysts.

- Next Steps
- **Next Meeting – Date/Time – Tuesday, September 10th from 9 – 3:00p.m. at ????**